



Ambassador Jeffrey L. Bleich – Canberra Times special supplement

Celebrating 70 years of Australian-U.S. relations

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2010 marks the 70th anniversary of official diplomatic relations between the United States and Australia. But what we commemorate this year existed long before any treaty, and extends far beyond mere words on paper.

Before there were diplomats in each others' capitals, there were world-traveling whalers and miners, sailors of the Great White Fleet and their gracious Australian hosts, yanks and diggers hunkered down in trenches in World War One. Our treaty in 1940 reflected all of these shared struggles and triumphs, and it illuminated a partnership that would sustain us through the darkest days of World War II and into the great dawn of our alliance.

Our partnership is built on more than security and mutual defense. It is the sum of hundreds of thousands of intangible human connections created over decades. We've trusted each other. We've valued each other's freedom, self-reliance, open markets and sense of fair play. We've taken our work seriously, without taking ourselves too seriously. And when we've disagreed, we've done it without being disagreeable. These qualities as much as any policy goals or formal agreements explain the magic of the relationship between our two nations and two peoples.

Today the U.S. looks to Australia in all of our most important efforts around the globe. Across every endeavor, from stopping the spread of nuclear weapons, to protecting the world from terror, to reducing carbon emissions, to increasing cultural exchange, to space exploration, to fighting fires to deepening channels of trade, Americans and Australians are working together.

Our relationship has endured because, like a good marriage, we work at it and stay committed to it. No matter what the issue, no matter which political party is in power or which challenge we face, we understand that we are better off together than we ever would be apart. As a result, we have one of the strongest partnerships -- perhaps the strongest partnership -- that exists anywhere in international relations.

When President Obama asked me to serve as his ambassador to Australia, I understood the great honor of being a custodian of this wonderful friendship. I promised first and foremost to listen to the Australian people and to never take our great partnership for granted. Because no matter how great our history, each new generation must discover



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and add its own chapter to that story. Today, we cannot know the challenges and opportunities we'll face in the next 70 years. But we do know that we will rise to any occasion better and stronger so long as we continue to do it together.